

Rubric Category	Organization
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Scores 1 and 2
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1a
Argument Type	All arguments

Organizing Your Argument: Sorting Evidence

Students organize their evidence into piles based on the claims it might support in order to make effective decisions about writing and revising paragraphs.

Understanding the Expectations

During the process of writing a paper, you accumulate all kinds of ideas and pieces of evidence that might support you as you make a truly interesting, meaningful argument about a topic. However, when you've done a really good job in taking notes to track those ideas and gather that evidence, you need to put some time and thought into how you're going to organize it, especially when it's time to write a draft.

There are many points in the process to think about how you want to organize your ideas and evidence, from the brainstorming phase all the way through to revising an essay when you realize a piece of evidence or a particular idea doesn't quite fit where you thought it would. Regardless of when you decide to turn your

attention to organization, though, you need to ensure that you're giving your reader a clear path to follow through your essay. While you may decide to structure your essay by talking about one character in each paragraph or one major point in the story in each paragraph, you can also organize it by deciding which claims you want to make and which pieces of evidence support them.

Regardless of what structure you choose, you need to be sure that your reader can follow your reasons for including each claim and for each piece of evidence that supports those claims. While you could wait until the very end to double-check that you've done that with your full draft, it can be even more effective to group your evidence and claims into piles earlier on in the writing process so you can decide what belongs in each paragraph before you spend a lot of time actually writing.

The trick for you, as the writer, is to keep your overall argument in mind while also considering all the sub-arguments and pieces of evidence that support it. Fortunately, the writing process gives you time and the opportunity to carefully consider many different possibilities for organizing all of those pieces.

Playing the "Piles" Game

1. Review the main claim that you currently wish to use as the overall argument for your essay. If you haven't settled on a main claim yet, choose 2 or 3 claims that you are currently working with. To come up with this list (short or long), look back in your notes or on any artifacts like paper charts or shared digital documents the class created that might contain alternate positions. If you are working with a full draft of an essay, your main claim would be the thesis.
2. For each main claim you chose, come up with at least 2 or 3 smaller claims (we'll call them "subclaims") that might help prove it. If you are working with a full draft of an essay, your subclaims would be the claims made in each paragraph.
3. Once you have your list of claims, gather together a list of the possible evidence that would support any of these claims. This evidence might be specific quotes or particular moments from the text described in your own words. You can review notes, shared digital documents, or paper charts. If

you are working with the full draft of an essay, you can highlight the claims and evidence you have already incorporated. Always remember that you can review the text for more ideas by looking for items you may have marked or annotated during the reading.

4. Create a digital document or work in your notebook and make two columns. If you are working with more than one potential main claim, make two columns for each.
5. Write or paste your potential subclaims in the left column, leaving a few lines between each claim. Give each subclaim a number (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).
6. Write or paste your pieces of evidence in the right column, leaving a few lines between each piece. These do not need to be written in any particular order. Give each piece of evidence a letter (A, B, C, D, etc.).

Your notes should look something like this. If you have more than one main claim you are considering, you will have more than one set of subclaims and evidence. We've given you an example for the main claim, one of the subclaims, and one of the pieces of evidence, but you should have more detail in your chart).

Main Claim #1 (Jack runs away from home because his father is ruining his life)	
Subclaim #1 (Jack needs to get away from his father because his father is mean to him, even when he tries to be good.)	Piece of Evidence A ("Jack's father said, 'You never do anything right, Jack!'")
Subclaim #2	Piece of Evidence B
Subclaim #3	Piece of Evidence C
Subclaim #4	Piece of Evidence D

7. Underneath each claim, write the letter of each piece of evidence that could support it. Remember: a piece of evidence might fit more than one claim. You can do this by yourself, but if you are with a partner or group, you can also help your partners match up their evidence to their claims. Now, your notes should look something like this:

Main Claim #1 (Jack runs away from home because he hates his father)	
Subclaim #1 (Jack needs to get away from his father because his father is mean to him, even when he tries to be good.) A and C	Piece of Evidence A ("Jack's father said, 'You never do anything right, Jack!'")
Subclaim #2 A, B, and D	Piece of Evidence B
Subclaim #3 B and C	Piece of Evidence C
Subclaim #4 D and C	Piece of Evidence D

8. Now you have "piles" of evidence and subclaims in your left-hand column. If you have not yet begun writing a draft of your essay, you can use these "piles" to help you decide how to create your paragraphs. Simply take a subclaim and 1-3 pieces of evidence that support it and structure your paragraph around those elements. If you are working with a full draft, you can use these "piles" to check if each paragraph is really focused on a clear point with well-selected evidence. If you find that you wrote a paragraph whose claim and evidence don't go together very strongly, that's a great one to rewrite!

Writing It Up

If you are early in the writing process, try writing a body paragraph based on one of your piles. Take a subclaim and prove it with the evidence you chose by writing strong introductions to the evidence and strong warrants. If you are working on revising a completed draft, find a paragraph that you feel isn't as effective as it could be and try writing a different version where you play around with using better-selected evidence to prove its subclaim.